

Attitude of Government Secondary School Teachers of Guwahati City Towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract

Inclusion has been defined as the acceptance of all pupils within the mainstream education system, taught within the common framework and identified as the responsibility of all teachers(Thomas.1997). Negative attitude and certain assumptions regarding difference and diversity in society for example related to socioeconomic status or disability remains critical barrier to development. Classroom teachers play a very important role in the implication of inclusive education. They must become more reflective regarding their own practices and change their methods to help different children learn in different ways. It is critical to reflect on teachers' role in creating or reducing barriers to learning as their attitude and behaviour can either enhance or impede a child's ability to learn. Factors such as the classroom's physical environment, the level of psychological comfort in the classroom and the quality of interaction between the teacher and the student affect whether and to what extent a student is able to learn and develop to his or her full potential. This study has been done to find the attitude of secondary school teachers of Guwahati city towards inclusive education. It also explored their views regarding facilities of inclusive education. The tool used in the study is entitled as "teachers attitude scale towards inclusive education" in short TASTIE-SA which has been developed and validated by Sood and Anand. TASTIE-SA scale is a Likert type scale having 47 items. The survey was conducted to view how teachers from general education view inclusion. There were 7 reviews of literature that focus on different facets of inclusion. The major findings of the study were that the teacher held positive attitude towards inclusive education. The teachers also express training for regular teachers, infrastructure and support system to work for implementation of inclusive education policy.

Key Words: Inclusive education, Teacher's Attitude, Government Secondary school

Introduction

Inclusive education means all children irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social and emotional, linguistic or other condition will be part of the mainstream education. It leads to the development of social skills and better social interaction because learners are exposed to real and environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interest and abilities. (Sharma, Bindal 2010) Inclusive education entails increasing the participation of students in and reducing their exclusion for the culture, curricular and communities of local school. (Both and Ains Low 1998:2).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special needs Education (1994) paved the way for inclusive education. The statement argues that regular school with an inclusive setting are the most effective way to fight against discriminatory attitude in order to build an inclusive society and to achieve education for all. (UNESCO,1994). During the subsequent efforts in many countries to affect educational policies and practice towards inclusive education as is appropriate for the country. (Ainscow and Cesar, 2006)

The landmark legislation of the Person of Disability Act (1995) emphasized greater access to regular education curriculum for students with disabilities in India. Subsequent policies, program and legislation including *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*, [Education for All movement] (2001),The Action Plan for Inclusive Education or Children with Disabilities (2005) and Right to Education (RTE) Act (2010) further strengthened the call for inclusive education. With development like these and many others in the last three decades, inclusive education has come to the forefront of educational reform for children with disability in India.

In the last three decades, Government has implemented legislations, policies and programmes to further the educational opportunities for children with disability. In addition, it has set up national institutes to conduct research, spread knowledge, and trained teachers to serve the large number of children with a variety of disabilities in the country. Though Government has provided opportunities to people having disabilities but according to Govt. estimate there are about 30 million children disabilities within India out of which only 4% of them have access to education. (Chief Commissioner for persons with Disabilities, 2007) The situation is worse in rural areas and far flanged hilly terrains. A number of researchers have pointed out that there has been severe shortage of trained teachers, lack of resources for teaching or learning and lack of infrastructure in school that support the education of students with disabilities (Bhatnagar and Das, 2013a)

Teachers Attitude Towards Inclusion

Inclusion is a major challenge facing educational system around the world. Teachers' attitude and behaviour can either enhance child's ability to learn. Teachers' positive attitude and acceptance for inclusive education are fundamental for successful implementation of inclusive educational programme. The positive attitude of the teachers and the inclusive learning environment created by teachers in the classroom has a major effect in the academic and social achievement of all students specially children with disabilities.

The literature on teacher's attitude toward inclusion shows that vast majority of the teachers supported the principle of inclusive education. Reasons cited for the lack of supportive attitude among teachers include apprehension about their lack of ability to accommodate student with disabilities in their classroom, the lack of administrative support and instructional material (especially assistive technology), and inability to manage students behaviour.(Forlin,2004)

Ali, Mustafa and Jelas (2006) studied the attitude and perceived knowledge of mainstream and special education teachers of primary and secondary school towards inclusive education in Malaysia and found that the general teachers have positive attitude towards inclusive education. The findings also show that collaboration and mainstream teachers is important and there should be a clear guidance on the implementation of inclusive education.

Elliot (2008) studied the relationship between the teachers' attitude towards the inclusion of children with mild and moderate disabilities in physical education settings observed that teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education provided all of their students with significantly more practice attempts, at a higher level of success.

Nayak (2008) while studying the attitude of parents and teachers towards inclusive education found that teachers look forward to teaching in an inclusive environment and are ready to face challenges. In the study done by Chopra (2008) on the factors influencing elementary school teacher's attitude towards inclusive education found that there was a significant difference in the male and female elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

Sharma (2012) on the study of the attitude of the regular school teachers toward inclusive education observed negative attitude of teachers towards inclusive education of children with special needs. While Ramkrishna Rao (2013) studying the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education found positive attitude of teachers toward inclusive education. He also observed significant difference of attitude of teachers towards inclusive education with respect to gender, locality, age, educational qualification and teaching experience.

While studying the attitude of the secondary private school regular teachers in Delhi, Bhatnagar and Das(2014) observed that there was a positive attitude of teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs but the teachers in the study do not feel prepared for teaching students with disabilities in their classroom.

Need of the study

From the review of research on attitude of teachers toward inclusion showed contradictory and inconclusive results. Studies have reported both positive and negative attitude of teachers towards inclusive education. While abundant research has been done in the western countries and some in India on the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in the last three decades, there is a paucity of research in Assam on this topic. This study has been conducted to find better understanding of teacher's attitude towards inclusive education.

Objectives

- (1) To study the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education.
- (2) To study the difference in attitude of male and female secondary schools teachers towards inclusive education.

Methodology

Method

For the present study Descriptive survey research method was used.

Population and Sample : Teachers of government secondary schools of Guwahati City were chosen as the population for the present study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study a sample of 20 (7male and 13female) secondary schools teachers were selected from 5 Government secondary schools of Guwahati city of Kamrup district of Assam.

Tools

Teacher Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education', in short TASTIE-SA was used. The scale had been developed and validated by Sood and Anand. The TASTIE-SA scale is a Likert type scale and contains 47 items. The items arranged in such a manner that in case of positive items 3=Agree,2= Undecided, 1= Disagree. Incase of negative item the scoring procedure is reversed. 1=Agree, 2 = undecided,3=disagree.

Although the scale had been especially developed for elementary school teachers but it can also be used for secondary and pre-primary school teachers as well.

Data Collection

For the purpose of collecting data, the investigator personally visited the schools and distributed the questionnaire to the sample teachers.

Main Findings

One of the objectives was to study the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education. The analysis of the data shows that the mean score of the attitude of the secondary school teachers (N=20) was 113.5 and corresponding Z score was 1.22. This value shows that the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education was favourable. The second objective of the study was to find the difference between male and female secondary school teachers toward inclusive education. The data was analysed statistically and the t value for male vs. female (.54) is significant at .01 levels. Thus the results showed that there is no significant difference between the

attitude of male and female secondary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Result and Discussion

The objectives of the study were to find the attitude of secondary regular school teachers in Guwahati city regarding inclusion of students with disabilities. The findings of the study showed positive attitude of both male and female secondary school teachers. The result of this finding concur with the results obtained by Bhatnagar, Das et al.(2014).

Although many teachers were willing to teach students with mild disabilities in their schools, a few of them were less willing to teach students with disruptive behaviour. A number of researchers including Kautrouba, Vamvakari, and Steliou (2006) found that lack of training was the primary reason of regular education teachers' negative attitude towards inclusion.

In addition teachers in this study were enthusiastic about inclusion but they were concerned about their lack of knowledge and skill to teach both regular and disabled students in the classroom. Study indicated that if teachers could get both pre and in service teacher training for inclusive education, they would be able to develop positive attitude toward it.

During the study, the researcher observed lack of resources needed for inclusive education in the government secondary school of Guwahati.

Conclusion : This study must have been the first study in Guwahati that explored Govt. secondary school teachers' attitude toward inclusive education. It revealed that regular school teachers in Guwahati generally have positive attitude toward inclusive education. A number of revelations have been made through this study. It was observed that the teachers were apprehensive in implementing inclusion. This is due to their lack of knowledge and skill and resources necessary for inclusion and from the perceived difficulties of working with children with autism and those with behaviours problems. Hence, the authority should provide training to the teachers for inclusive education. Moreover, schools should be equipped with appropriate infrastructure and classroom should have necessary resources for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

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